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MARKETS AND MISERY.

BY UPTON SINCLAIR, AUTHOR OF "THE JUNGLE."

THE disinterested lover of his country who looks round him at the present day finds many things which seem to him disturbing. We are a proverbially optimistic people, and are accustomed to do a good deal of trusting to the Lord in our emergencies; yet there can hardly be an intelligent man to-day who is not conscious of deep disquietude in his soul. We have witnessed the concentration of the industrial powers of the country in the hands of a few men, who have apparently gotten beyond all control of government and law. We have witnessed stroke after stroke of "high finance," which we have perceived to differ little from open robbery, and which we have yet been powerless to prevent. We have witnessed a series of appalling revelations of insurance "graft." We have for years been aware of the corruption which prevails in every department of our Government; and of late we have read the disclosures of Mr. Lincoln Steffens, and his announcement that the corruption is simply another form of economic domination—that this universal bribery is merely another device whereby the "money-power" rules. "A revolution has happened," he tells us, adding that we have no longer "a government of the people, by the people, for the people," but "a government of the people, by the rascals, for the rich." Following closely upon these disclosures, we saw the outbreak of a labor war in Colorado; and we understood that it was directly traceable to the fact that the will of the people of a State, declared at the polls by a vote of two to one, was thwarted by open and flagrant bribery. We saw following upon it deeds of violence upon both sides, ending with the complete overthrow of American institutions in one of the United States, and the setting up of a despotism of "business men." We see the "open shop" move-

ment gathering headway, and we know that the result of this must inevitably be the lowering of wages; and at the same time we see the cost of living rising year by year, and so we know that it is inevitable that the popular discontent should grow.

We have grown so used to the failure of all efforts at reform, that we generally take the failure for granted in advance; but still we continue to struggle. Mr. Steffens and Miss Tarbell appeal to the public conscience, and Mr. Lawson and Mr. Russell appeal to the public wrath; Mr. Mitchell organizes the labor-unions, Mr. Post tries to smash them, and Mr. Hearst tries to drive them into politics; Mr. Watson wants the Government to dissolve the trusts, Mr. Bryan wants it to buy them up, Mr. Cleveland wants it to reform the tariff—and so on through a various assortment of remedies.

One who examined these various plans would find, however, one point of agreement among them all. Their authors recognize that before these evils came upon us we had free competition in our industries; and that their coming upon us is coincident with the abolishing of competition and the establishing of various forms of monopoly. Therefore, what we have to do is reestablish free competition, the good old American system of a fair field and no favor, and then all will be well once more. Some of us, who are in business, are more especially interested in accomplishing this with the labor-unions; others of us who are in the unions are more interested in accomplishing it with the trusts; a few of us, sitting aloft upon high episcopal, editorial, and academic thrones, are disinterestedly interested in achieving it with both. But because we perceive that it is a matter of life and death, and because failure is unthinkable, we dare not admit that we are failing, and we resolutely shut our eyes to the fact of our failure and go on blindly repeating our ancient formula. To acknowledge that industrial competition is dead, and will stay dead, would be to acknowledge that the evils of the time were without a remedy; and the people would not stand that.

I am acquainted with only one man among all our orthodox advisers who does not let the people stand between him and the truth, who has not only the eyes to see the facts, but the courage to speak them out—Mr. Brooks Adams. “Masses accumulate in the United States,” explains Mr. Adams, in his “New Empire,” “because administration by masses is cheaper than administration

by detail. Masses take the form of corporations, and the men who rise to the control of these corporations rise because they are fittest. The process is natural selection. The life of the community lies in these masses. Derange them, and there would immediately follow an equivalent loss of energy." This is no trifling matter either, as Mr. Adams goes on to explain; for we are battling for our very lives with other nations, and the slightest mistake may cost us the victory, may "propel the seat of empire" to some other land. Our greatest danger, in Mr. Adams's view, is just our sentimental regard for the "people" and what the people wish—a regard which leads us to shrink from the truth about our industrial necessities. "The alternative is plain," he declares. "We may cherish ideals and risk substantial benefits to realize them," and that means national ruin. What we have to do is to "regard our Government dispassionately, as we should any other matter of business." Instead of viewing with horror the prospect of our political institutions being overthrown by the trusts, we should face this result, recognizing it as both inevitable and desirable. Our masses of capital "are there because the conditions of our civilization are such as to make it cheaper that they should be there; and if our political institutions are ill-adapted to their propagation and development, then political institutions must be readjusted." We may be unwilling to learn this lesson, but it will be taught us all the same. "With conservative populations, *slaughter* is nature's remedy," says Mr. Adams. "History teems with examples of civilizations which have been destroyed through an unreasoning inertia. . . . The fall of the empire of Haroun-al-Rashid exemplifies an universal law." Mr. Adams goes on to set forth that "the greatest prize of modern times is Northern China"; and because, since his book was written, we have lost the chance which we had to seize it, in his judgment we must be already on the way to our ruin.

There is a certain relentlessness about Mr. Adams which fills the reader with rebellion, and makes him think. The average imperialist carefully avoids doing this; he veils his doctrines with moral phrases, with the decent pretence of "destiny" at the very least. But Mr. Adams dances a very war-dance upon the thing called "moral sense"—never before was it made to seem such an impertinent superfluity. Whatever may have been the case with others, it had happened to the writer of this paper to read

Roosevelt and Kipling and the Kaiser and all of the other prophets of Imperialism, and to have only vague suspicions and discomforts; it was not until he came upon "The New Empire" that he was forced at last to fight his way out of the nightmare jungle of the devil's gospel of *Competition*.

Have you, the reader, never had one smallest doubt? Does it not, for instance, seem strange to you now, when you think of it, that this mighty people cannot stay quietly at home, and live their own life and mind their own affairs? How does it happen that our existence as a nation depends upon expansion? Is it that our population is growing so fast? But here is our Imperialist President lamenting that our population is not growing fast enough! And so we have to fight to find room for our children; and we have to have more children, in order that we may be able to fight! We deplore race-suicide, and we give as our reason that it prevents race-murder!

Picture to yourself half a dozen men on an island. If the island be fertile, they can get along without any foreign trade, can they not? And then why cannot a *nation* do it? According to Mulhall, in 1894 two millions of our agricultural laborers were raising food for foreign countries. And all our imports are luxuries, save a few things such as tea and coffee and some medicines! And still our existence as a nation depends upon foreign trade—trade with Filipinos and Chinamen, with Hottentots and Esquimaux! Why?

Can you, the reader, tell me? We manufacture more than we can use, you say. Unless we can sell the balance to the Chinamen, some of our factories must close down, and then some of our people would starve. But why, I ask, cannot our own starving people have the things that go abroad—some of all that food that goes abroad, for instance? Why is it that the Chinamen come first, and our own people afterwards? Until we have made some things for the Chinamen, you explain, we have no money to buy anything ourselves. And so always the Chinamen first! It seems such a strange, upside-down arrangement—does it not seem so to you? For, look you, the people of England are in the same fix, and the people of Germany are in the same fix—the people of all the competing nations are in the same fix! They actually have to go to war to kill each other, in order to get a chance to sell something to the Chinamen, so that they can get

money to buy some things for themselves! They were actually doing that in Manchuria for eighteen months! More amazing yet, they had to go and murder some of the Chinamen, in order to compel the rest to buy something, so that they could get money to buy something for themselves!

How long can it be possible for a human being, with a spark of either conscience or brains in him, to gaze at such a state of affairs and not *know* that there is something wrong about it? And how long could he gaze before the truth of it would flash over him—that the reason for it is that some private party owns all the machinery and materials of production, and will not give the people anything, until they have first made something that can be sold! That all the world lies at the mercy of those who own the materials and machinery, and who leave men to starve when they cannot make profits! And that this is why we Americans cannot stay at home and be happy, but are forced to go trading with Filipinos and Chinamen, Hottentots and Esquimaux, and competing for “empire” with our brothers in England and Germany and Japan!

If the reader be an average American, these thoughts will be new to him. He has been brought up on a diet of diluted Malthusianism. He understands that life has always been a struggle for existence and always will be; that there is not food enough to go round, and that therefore, every now and then, the surplus population has to be cut down by famine and war. I said “diluted” Malthusianism, because, while he swears allegiance to the doctrine, he doesn’t like to think about it, and when it comes to the practical test he shows that he does not really believe it. Whenever famine comes, he subscribes to a grain-fund, and does his best to defeat nature; when war comes, he gets up a Red Cross Society for the same purpose. And yet he still continues to swear by this wiping out of the nations, and any discussion about abolishing poverty he waves aside as Utopian.

The writer may fail in his purpose with this paper, but he will not have written in vain if he can lead a few men to see the pitiful folly of that half-baked theory which ranks men with the wild beasts of the jungle, and ignores the existence of both science and morality. He can do that, assuredly, with any one whom he can induce to read one little book—Prince Kropotkin’s “Fields, Factories and Workshops.”

The book was published eight years ago, but apparently it has not yet had time to affect the cogitations of the orthodox economists. You still read, as you have been used to reading since the days of Adam Smith, that the possibilities of the soil are strictly limited, and that population always stays just within the starvation limit. Nearly all the fertile land in this country, for instance, is now in use, and so we shall soon reach the limit here. The forty million people of Great Britain have long since passed it, and they would starve to death were it not for our surplus. And there are portions of the world where population is even more dense, as in Belgium. All this you have known from your school-days, and you think you know it perfectly, and beyond dispute; and so how astonished you will be to be told that it is simply one of the most stupid and stupefying delusions that ever were believed and propagated among men: that the limits of the productive possibilities of the soil have not only not been attained, but are, so far as science can now see, absolutely unattainable; that not only could England support with ease her own population on her own soil, and not only could Belgium do it, but any most crowded portion of the world could do it, and do it once again, and yet once again, and do it with two or three hours of work a day by a small portion of its population! That England could now support, not merely her thirty-three million inhabitants, but seventy-five and perhaps a hundred million! And that the United States could now support a billion and a quarter of people, or just about the entire population of this planet! And that this could be done year after year, and entirely without any possibility of the exhaustion of the soil! And all this not any theory of a closet speculator or a Utopian dreamer, but by methods that are used year after year by thousands and tens of thousands of men who are making fortunes by it in all portions of the world—in the market-gardens of Paris and London, of Belgium, Holland and the island of Jersey, the truck-farms of Florida and Minnesota, and of Norfolk, Virginia!

Prince Kropotkin writes:

“While science devotes its chief attention to industrial pursuits, a limited number of lovers of nature and a legion of workers, whose very names will remain unknown to posterity, have created of late a quite new agriculture, as superior to modern farming as modern farming is superior to the old three-fields system of our ancestors. They smile

when we boast about the rotation system, having permitted us to take from the field one crop every year, or four crops every three years, because their ambition is to have six and nine crops from the very same plot of land every twelve months. They do not understand our talk about good and bad soils, because they make the soil themselves, and make it in such quantities as to be compelled yearly to sell some of it; otherwise, it would raise up the levels of their gardens by half an inch every year. They aim at cropping, not five or six tons of grass to the acre, as we do, but from fifty to one hundred tons of various vegetables on the same space; not twenty-five dollars' worth of hay, but five hundred dollars' worth of vegetables, of the plainest description, cabbages and carrots. That is where agriculture is going now."

The writer tells about all these things in detail. Here is the *culture maraîchère* of Paris—a M. Ponce, with a tiny orchard of two and seven-tenths acres, for which he pays \$500 rent a year, and from which he takes produce that could not be named short of several pages of figures: 20,000 pounds of carrots, 20,000 of onions and radishes, 6,000 heads of cabbage, 3,000 of cauliflower, 5,000 baskets of tomatoes, 5,000 dozen choice fruit, 154,000 heads of "salad"—in all, 250,000 pounds of vegetables. Says the author:

"The Paris gardener not only defies the soil—he would grow the same crops on an asphalt pavement—he defies climate. His walls, which are built to reflect light and to protect the wall-trees from the northern winds, his wall-tree shades and glass protectors, his *pépinières*, have made a rich Southern garden out of the suburbs of Paris."

The consequence of this is that the population of the districts of that city, three millions and a half of people, could, if it were necessary, be maintained in their own territory, provided with food both animal and vegetable, from a piece of ground less than sixty miles on a side! And at the same time, by the same methods, they are raising 30 tons of potatoes on an acre in Minnesota, and 350 bushels of corn in Iowa, and 600 bushels of onions in Florida. And with machinery, on the prairie wheat-farms, they raise crops at a cost which makes twelve hours and a half of work of *all kinds* enough to supply a man with the flour part of his food for a year! And while all this has been going on for a decade, while encyclopedias have been written about it, our political economists continue to discuss wages and labor, rent and interest, exchange and consumption, from the standpoint of the

dreary, century-old formula that there must always be an insufficient supply of food in the world!

Such is the state of affairs with agriculture; and now how is it with everything else? In the Thirteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor (1898), Carroll D. Wright has figured the relative costs of doing various pieces of work by hand and by modern machinery. Here are a few of the cases he gives:

"Making of 10 plows: By hand, 2 workmen, performing 11 distinct operations, working a total of 1,180 hours, and paid \$54.46. By machine, 52 workmen, 97 operations, 37½ hours, \$7.90.

"Making of 500 lbs. of butter: By hand, 3 men, 7 operations, 125 hours, \$10.66. By machine, 7 men, 8 operations, 12½ hours, \$1.78.

"Making 500 yds. twilled cottonade: By hand, 3 men, 19 operations, 7,534 hours, \$135.61. By machine, 252 men, 43 operations, 84 hours, \$6.81.

"Making of 100 pairs of cheap boots: By hand, 2 workmen, 83 operations, 1,436 hours, \$408.50. By machine, 113 workmen, 122 operations, 154 hours, \$35.40."

Thus we see human labor has been cut to the extent of from 80 to 95 per cent. From other sources I have gathered a few facts about the latest machinery. In Pennsylvania, some sheep were shorn and the wool turned into clothing in 6 hours, 4 minutes. A steer was killed, its hide tanned, turned into leather and made into shoes in 24 hours. The ten million bottles used by the Standard Oil Company every year are now blown by machinery. An electric riveting-machine puts rivets in steel-frame buildings at the rate of two per minute. Two hundred and sixty needles per minute, ten million match-sticks per day, five hundred garments cut per day—each by a machine tended by one little boy. The newest weaving-looms run through the dinner-hour and an hour and a half after the factory closes, making cloth with no one to tend them at all. The new basket-machine invented by Mergenthaler, the inventor of the linotype, is now in operation everywhere, "making fruit-baskets, berry-baskets and grape-baskets of a strength and quality never approached by hand labor. Fancy a single machine that will turn out completed berry-baskets at the rate of 12,000 per day of nine hours' work! This is at the rate of 1,300 per hour, or over twenty baskets a minute! One girl, operating this machine, does the work of twelve skilled hand operators!"

Since all these wonders are the commonplace facts of modern industry, it is not surprising that here and there men should begin to think about them; here is the naïve question recently asked by the editor of a Montreal newspaper which I happened on:

"With the best of machinery at the present day, one man can produce woollens for 300 people. One man can produce boots and shoes for 1,000 people. One man can produce bread for 200 people. Yet thousands cannot get woollens, boots and shoes, or bread. *There must be some reason for this state of affairs!*"

There is a reason, a perfectly plain and simple reason, which all over the world the working-people, whom it concerns, are coming to understand. The reason is that all the woollen manufactories, the boot and shoe and bread manufactories, and all the sources of the raw materials of these, and all the means of handling and distributing them when they are manufactured, belong to a few private individuals instead of to the community as a whole. And so, instead of the cotton-spinner, the shoe-operative and the bread-maker having free access to them, to work each as long as he pleases, produce as much as he cares to, and exchange his products for as much of the products of other workers as he needs, each one of these workers can only get at the machines by the consent of another man, and then does not get what he produces, but only a small fraction of it, and does not get that except when the owner of the balance can find some one with money enough to buy that balance at a profit to him!

Prof. Hertzka, the Austrian economist, in his "Laws of Social Evolution," has elaborately investigated the one real question of political economy to-day, the actual labor and time necessary for the creation, under modern conditions, of the necessaries of life for a people. Here are the results for the Austrian people, of 22,000,000:

"It takes 26,250,000 acres of agricultural land, and 7,500,000 of pasturage, for all agricultural products. Then I allowed a house to be built for every family, consisting of five rooms. I found that all industries, agriculture, architecture, building, flour, sugar, coal, iron, machine-building, clothing, and chemical production, need 615,000 laborers employed 11 hours per day, 300 days a year, to satisfy every imaginable want for 22,000,000 inhabitants.

"These 615,000 laborers are only 12.3 per cent. of the population able to do work, excluding women and all persons under 16 or over 50 years of age: all these latter to be considered as not able.

"Should the 5,000,000 able men be engaged in work, instead of 615,000, they need only to work 36.9 days every year to produce everything needed for the support of the population of Austria. But should the 5,000,000 work all the year, say 300 days—which they would probably have to do to keep the supply fresh in every department—each one would only work 1 hour and 22½ minutes per day.

"But to engage to produce all the *luxuries*, in addition, would take, in round figures, 1,000,000 workers, classed and assorted as above, or only 20 per cent. of all those able, excluding every woman, or every person under 16 or over 50, as before. The 5,000,000 able, strong male members could produce everything imaginable for the whole nation of 22,000,000 in 2 hours and 12 minutes per day, working 300 days a year."

But then you say: If this be true, if two hours' work will produce everything, how can everybody go on working twelve hours forever? They can't; and that is just why I am writing this paper. They can do it only until they have filled the needs, first of themselves, then of all the Filipinos and Chinamen, Hottentots and Esquimaux, who have money to buy anything—and then until they have filled all the factories, warehouses and stores of the country to overflowing. Then they cannot do one single thing more; then they are out of work. They can go on so long as their masters can find a market in which to sell their product at a profit; then they have to stop. And then suddenly (*instantly*, God help them!) they have to take their choice between two alternatives—between an industrial democracy, and a political empire. Either they will hear Prince Kropotkin, or they will hear Mr. Brooks Adams. Either they will take the instruments and means of production and produce for use and not for profit; or else they will forge themselves into an engine of war to be wielded by a military despot. In that case, they will fling themselves upon China and Japan, and seize Northern China, "the greatest prize of modern times." They will enter upon a career of empire, and by the wholesale slaughter of war they will keep down population, while at the same time by the wholesale destruction of war they keep down the surplus of products. So there will be more work for the workers for a time, and more profits for the masters for a time; until what wealth there is in Northern China has also been concentrated and possessed, when once more there will begin distress. By that time, however, we shall have an hereditary aristocracy strongly intrenched, and a proletariat degraded beyond recall; so that our riots will end in

mere slaughter and waste, and we shall never again see freedom. We shall run then the whole course of the Roman Empire—of frenzied profligacy among the wealthy, and beastly ferocity among the populace: until at last we fall into imbecility, and are overwhelmed by some new, clean race which the strong heart of nature has poured out.

Before many years, now, this question must become the question of the hour. The cotton-factories of Massachusetts and Canada are shut down half the time, and those who work in them are told that there is too much cotton—that they and their children must go in rags because they have spun so much cloth. And, of course, some of the railroad hands who moved the cotton are also out, and the miners who furnished the coal for the factories; two years ago a similar trouble in other industries had turned some two or three million wage-earners into the streets to starve, when the Russo-Japanese war gave a brief respite to our capitalists. In England this condition of unemployment has been chronic for a decade, and the reader who has a strong stomach may get Mr. Jack London's "People of the Abyss," and read what are the consequences of such a state of affairs. Here is a paragraph chosen at random—a scene in a London Park:

"We went up the narrow gravelled walk. On the benches on either side was arrayed a mass of miserable and diseased humanity, the sight of which would have impelled Doré to more diabolical flights of fancy than he ever succeeded in achieving. It was a welter of filth and rags, of all manner of loathsome skin-diseases, open sores, bruises, grossness, indecency, leering monstrosities and bestial faces. A chill, raw wind was blowing, and these creatures huddled there in their rags, sleeping for the most part, or trying to sleep. Here were a dozen women, ranging in age from twenty years to seventy. Next a babe, possibly nine months old, lying asleep, flat on the hard bench, with neither pillow nor covering, nor with any one looking after it. Next, half a dozen men sleeping bolt-upright, and leaning against one another in their sleep. In one place a family group, a child asleep in its sleeping mother's arms, and the husband (or male mate) clumsily mending a dilapidated shoe. On another bench, a woman trimming the frayed strips of her rags with a knife, and another woman with thread and needle, sewing up rents. Adjoining, a man holding a sleeping woman in his arms. Farther on, a man, his clothing caked with gutter-mud, asleep with his head in the lap of a woman, not more than 25 years old, and also asleep.

"'Those women there,' said our guide, 'will sell themselves for thru'pence, or tu'pence, or a loaf of stale bread.' He said it with a cheerful sneer."

And then turn back to the preface:

"It must not be forgotten that the time of which I write was considered 'good times' in England. The starvation and lack of shelter I encountered constitute a chronic condition of misery which is never wiped out, even in the periods of greatest prosperity. Following the summer in question came a hard winter. To such an extent did the suffering and positive starvation increase that society was unable to cope with it. Great numbers of the unemployed formed into processions, as many as a dozen at a time, and daily marched through the streets of London crying for bread. Mr. Justin McCarthy, writing in the month of January, 1903, to the New York 'Independent,' briefly epitomizes the situation as follows: 'The workhouses have no space left in which to pack the starving crowds who are craving every night at their doors for food and shelter. All the charitable institutions have exhausted their means in trying to raise supplies of food for the famishing residents of the garrets and cellars of London lanes and alleys.'"

And all over the world it is just the same; the race for markets is becoming fiercer and fiercer, and the markets are growing scarcer and scarcer. The greatest prize of modern times has been seized; and so the Fall River operatives who supplied the Manchus with cotton shirts are out of work; and the cotton-mills of Georgia and Alabama are filling up with children six or eight years old who work for nine cents a day; and even these will soon be displaced, because in the cotton-mills of India the wretched victims of the dying monster of Competition can be made to work both day and night, eating and sleeping by their machines, and perishing within two or three years.

The only question, of course, is as to how long it can go on. All over the world, the workers of society are finding out about it, and are teaching their companions about it; and so we see, looming like a mighty storm-cloud, in every civilized nation, the Socialist movement. Ridicule and obloquy, blandishments and menaces, persecution, exile and imprisonment, have all proved powerless to stop it; devoted and heroic men and women give their labor and their lives to teaching it—writing, speaking, exhorting, toiling day and night to open the eyes of the masses to the truth. And in every nation the movement goes ahead and forms a political party; and, when that is done, it begins to cast a vote, and every year that vote is larger than it was the year before. In Germany, it was 30,000 in 1867, 487,000 in 1877, 763,000 in 1887, 1,787,000 in 1893, 2,125,000 in 1898 and 3,008,-

000 in 1903. In Austria, it was 90,000 in 1895 and nearly a million in 1900. In Belgium, it was 334,000 in 1894 and 534,000 in 1898. In Switzerland, it was 14,000 in 1890 and 100,000 in 1901. In France, it has members in the cabinet, and in Italy and Australia it holds the balance of power and turns out ministries. In Japan, it has started its first newspaper, and in Argentina it has elected its first deputy. In the United States, it now has 2,200 locals and 30,000 subscribing members. It has several monthly magazines and about thirty-five daily and weekly papers, one of which ("The Appeal to Reason," of Girard, Kansas), has a circulation of a quarter of a million, and at date of writing is preparing the largest edition ever printed by any paper in the world—the so-called "Trust Edition," of over three million copies. In 1888, the Socialist vote in America was 2,000; in 1892, it was 21,000; in 1898, it was 91,000; in 1900, it was 131,000; in 1902, it was 285,000 and in 1904 it was 436,000. In 1906 it will be between 700,000 and 800,000, unless the writer is very much mistaken; unless he is still more mistaken, Socialism will, from that time, be the only living political issue in America. His study of the economic situation underlying this political phenomenon has led him to believe that the industrial revolution that is coming must take place in America within the next ten years; and his object in writing this paper is to urge upon patriotic and intelligent Americans, of all classes, that it is time for them to open their eyes to the facts. The question to be considered—the only question—is whether they wish that coming revolution to be one of ballots or of bullets; mainly, he believes, this now depends upon what proportion of the ruling class, the present industrial aristocracy, can be made to take an intelligent view of Socialism, and to perceive that its final triumph is as inevitable as the breaking out of a chicken from its egg.

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